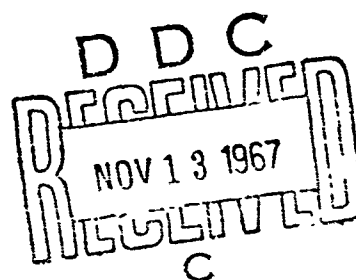


AD660646

ACCOMMODATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM: THE KEY  
TO SOCIOPOLITICAL SOLIDARITY

Gerald C. Hickey

October 1967



This document has been approved  
for public release and sale; its  
distribution is unlimited.

3707

Copyright © 1967  
The RAND Corporation

ACCOMMODATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM: THE KEY  
TO SOCIOPOLITICAL SOLIDARITY

Gerald C. Hickey\*

The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California

Social and political complexity in any given society does not necessarily mean confusion and chaos; given the right circumstances, the interdependence that is intrinsic to such complexity can give rise to a kind of solidarity. It would be similar to Durkheim's organic solidarity which arises out of the interdependence and need to cooperate as the division of labor in society becomes more specialized and diverse.\*\* Without this type of solidarity the society would fragment and perhaps collapse. Sociopolitical complexity exists in South Vietnam, and it is a contention of this paper that many of the social and political groups have become better organized in the past few years. Other contentions are that accommodation of the central government to these groups is the means by which solidarity can be achieved. While this will mean different things to different

---

\* Any views expressed in this paper are those of the author. They should not be interpreted as reflecting the views of The RAND Corporation or the official opinion or policy of any of its governmental or private research sponsors. Papers are reproduced by The RAND Corporation as a courtesy to members of its staff.

\*\* Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society, The Free Press, Glencoe, 1960.

groups, it would involve bringing representatives of all groups into a national assembly vested with considerable power. This process already has begun, but whether it will continue remains to be seen.

A great deal of Vietnamese sociopolitical complexity is rooted in a regionalism that has persisted throughout the history of that nation. Regionalism was perhaps an inevitable development given the strong village orientation of Vietnamese society and the historical nam tien or "advance to the south" which took place over a thousand-year period and carried the Vietnamese population from the Red River delta, along the physically segmented coastal plain into the delta of the Mekong River. Significantly, many of the historical conflicts among the Vietnamese were inter-regional, and regional divisions formed the basis for French control in establishing the protectorates of Tonkin and Annam in northern and central Vietnam and the colony of Cochinchina in the south.

Strong regional sentiments also have been a source of some disruption and strife in recent Vietnamese history. The hundreds of thousands of northern Vietnamese who came south following the Geneva Accords in 1954 have only partially integrated themselves into southern society. As one Vietnamese observer put it, "They (the northerners) continue to be a nation within a nation." This has resulted in a

northerner-southerner dichotomy that cuts across social and political lines from the street vendor to the highest echelons of the central government. Regionalism also was an important element in the violent events of early 1966 when the "Struggle Forces" of central Vietnam assumed control of Hué and Danang in defiance of Saigon. The central Vietnamese, proud of their imperial past when the emperors resided in Hué, resent being ruled by a government seated in Saigon.

By and large, Vietnamese political parties have been regionally oriented. Ngo Dinh Diem's Cach Mang Quoc Gia or National Revolutionary Party found its staunchest following in Hué where it originated, and in spite of the fact that it became the predominant political party throughout the country during the Diem regime, it never really took root in the south. After the coup d'état of November 1, 1963, which toppled the Diem government, this party was disbanded, and no traces are left in the south. With this coup d'état some of the older regional political parties began to function more openly. Among them were the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (usually referred to as the VNQDD or Kuomintang Nationalist Party) which had long been active in central Vietnam, particularly in the Quang Ngai area, and the Revolutionary Dai Viets under Ha Thuc Ky, also strong in central Vietnam. The Tan Dai Viet (also known as the

Southern Dai Viets) led by Dr. Nguyen Ton Hoan, who served briefly as Deputy Premier under General Nguyen Khanh early in 1964, has wide support in the Saigon area. Among the refugees who came south were members of the Northern Dai Viet Party, but the Party remains small and more or less restricted to professionals and intellectuals.

Not apart from the political arena are the major religious groups found in Vietnam. The majority of northern refugees were Catholic (Catholicism was more widespread in the north than in any other part of Vietnam), and this influx plus the nine-year regime of Catholic Ngo Dinh Diem resulted in some well organized groups that have been active politically (in the September 3, 1967 elections, Catholic candidates won 29 of the 60 Senate seats). In recent years, Buddhism also has experienced an increased number of politically active organizations. The Buddhist Institute of South Vietnam, centered in the Xa Loi pagoda in Saigon, was formed in the mid-1950's, and this pagoda became the focal point in the events that led to the 1963 coup d'état against the Diem regime. Since that time two other Buddhist movements have emerged. One is led by Venerable Tam Chau, and its headquarters is the Dharma Institute in Saigon. The other is Venerable Tri Quang's group, identified with the An Quang pagoda in Saigon but with stronger support in Hué and Da Nang.

Another recent manifestation of growing Buddhist organization was the establishment in Saigon of Van Hanh University, a Buddhist institution that is rapidly growing in stature as a center for higher learning in South Vietnam.

The Cao Daist religious movement began in the mid-1920's as a new religion that would encompass all the great religions of the world in preparation for another coming of the Messiah. The first Cao Daist center was located in Tay Ninh Province, but eventually as the sect spread, it splintered into eight identifiable branches. During the 1930's a mystic named Huynh Phu So preached a return to "pure Buddhism" in the provinces of the western Mekong River delta, and his followers formed the Hoa Hao religious movement. Both of these religious sects became relatively inactive after they were defeated by the Diem government in a 1955 conflict, but since the end of the Diem regime, they have again appeared on the political scene. Although factions exist in the Hoa Hao hierarchy, the sect has continued to spread in the Mekong delta. Expansion also is characteristic of Cao Daism, not only in the delta, but in central Vietnam and in the highlands where pockets of Vietnamese populations are found.

Another situation contributing to the sociopolitical complexity of South Vietnam is ethnolinguistic pluralism.

The ethnic Vietnamese are the majority, and they control the national political life. The Chinese, however, while they are a large urban minority, wield great influence in financial activities both national and local. Located in parts of the Mekong River delta, the Khmer are descendants of a population that once was part of the Khmer Empire, and they have close cultural affinities with the neighboring Cambodians. The Cham are remnants of a once large population that formed the majority group in the Kingdom of Champa until its final defeat and destruction by the Vietnamese in the 15th century. Cham populations remain in the Phan Rang area of the southcentral coastal plain and in the vicinity of Chau Doc in the southwest corner of the Mekong River delta. Upland ethnic groups, which can be designated collectively as the Highlanders, speak either languages of the Malayo-Polynesian or Mon Khmer stocks. While all of the Highlanders are racially and linguistically distinct from the Vietnamese, some have racial and linguistic affinities to the Cham, whose language is of the Malayo-Polynesian stock, while others have the same kind of ties to the Khmer, whose Cambodian language is Mon Khmer. Research done thus far indicates that the Highlanders can be further differentiated into between 25 and 30 separate ethnic groups.

In recent history the existing sociopolitical complexity has been compounded by the emergence of the Viet Minh movement against the French and the related Viet Cong, a term coined by the South Vietnamese government to differentiate it from the Viet Minh, or as it calls itself, The National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. Regardless of what it is called (the term Viet Cong is more widely used and so will be employed here), this movement was built on Viet Minh cadre left in South Vietnam after the Geneva Accords in 1954, and their goal was the overthrow of the Diem government. By 1959 the movement was visibly being sustained by a flow of regroupes -- those who went north after Geneva to receive further training, after which they were infiltrated back into the south -- and armed force became one Viet Cong form of political action. Since 1965 the flow of regroupes has been largely replaced by North Vietnamese Army units. In South Vietnam the Viet Cong now function as a political-military organization that cuts across regional, religious, and ethnic lines.

Currently the most concerted efforts being made at achieving sociopolitical solidarity in South Vietnam are the central government's implementation of the new constitution, part of which involves holding elections to name a



new government, and the pacification program. The Viet Cong effort is through political persuasion and armed force. Considering the government's side, the aim of pacification is to extend government control over the whole country, and this involves replacing Viet Cong presence by government presence. This raises the question of what is the Viet Cong presence? For the purposes of this paper the best way to discuss this is in terms of polar extremes. At one extreme are the places where the Viet Cong have had control for a long period of time -- since the beginning of the Viet Minh movement -- with brief if any intermittent control by the French or the government. At the other extreme are areas where Viet Cong presence has been fleeting, characterized by such things as incursions by armed bands that remain for a very brief period.

In those places where the Viet Minh-Viet Cong have long held sway, their influence has permeated deeply and affected most aspects of the society. One official definition of the Viet Cong infrastructure is that it "embodies the party (Peoples Revolutionary Party) control structure, which includes a command and administrative apparatus (Central Office South of Vietnam) at the national level, and the administration of a parallel front organization (National

Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam), both of which extend from the national through the hamlet level." In these areas it also is common for the Viet Cong to organize many of the economic activities -- rice marketing, land reform, and taxation. Most important, however, is that their influence has penetrated the attitude-value system. The net result of these innovations is that, after a long period they have developed localized Viet Cong societies.

Some of the areas where there have been Viet Minh-Viet Cong enclaves for at least 20 years can be pointed out as they are the areas where the Viet Minh left cadres following the 1954 Geneva Agreements. Those of us who travelled extensively in rural Vietnam in 1956-57 had some of these areas described to us as being "under Viet Minh control," and we were cautioned to avoid them. This included portions of the swampy Ca Mau peninsula, large areas of the Plain of Reeds, large parts of what is now called War Zone D northwest of Saigon and highland areas in some of the coastal provinces, particularly in Binh Dinh, Quang Ngai, Quang Tin Quang Nam, and Thua Thien. There also were enclaves in northern Kontum province.

From my own experience I can give two examples of penetrating Viet Cong influence in two widely different areas,

one occupied by Vietnamese peasants in Cu Chi district, Hau Nghia province, and the other by the Katu, a highland ethnic group in central Vietnam.

During a brief visit to Vietnam in 1962, a colleague and I visited some villages in Cu Chi district in what is now Hau Nghia province. This area has been regarded as "the birthplace of the Viet Minh movement in the south," and the French described it as pourri, a place saturated with Viet Minh. The area was considered insecure, and with rented automobile, no arms nor any escort, we entered some villages and talked with farmers and their families about social and economic problems. Expressions characteristically used in Viet Cong propaganda were part of their ordinary conversation; for example instead of referring to the central government, some used the expression "Diem-My" ("Diem-American," which in the propaganda usually was followed by either "clique" or "gang"). Although unsolicited, some pointed out that there were families that have had three generations of males in the Viet Minh (they, like many people in the rural areas, never used the designation Viet Cong). Then some villagers expressed open admiration for the Viet Cong cadre because of their dedicated leaders, brave spirit, and willingness to bear hardships. None of these things were said

defiantly, but rather casually in the course of conversation over tea. Clearly Viet Cong influence, like the numerous tunnels in the villages, extended widely and burrowed deep.

The Katu of central Vietnam are considered one of the most backward of the highland ethnic groups. Referred to by one French writer as "Les Chasseurs du Sang" ("the Blood Hunters") because of their ritual killing of human victims to obtain blood for sacrificial offerings to their spirits, the Katu were never brought under effective French control. All who have had contact with them describe the Katu as illiterate in Vietnamese and without a written language of their own. Throughout the Indochina War, they were under the control of the Viet Minh, and the central government has yet to bring the Katu area within its administrative network. When I visited some remote Katu villages (three days up river by sampan and then a long walk into the mountains) in 1957 with an American missionary who had made some contact with the Katu, we encountered considerable hostility. The chief of the first village visited refused to permit us to remain overnight because "the Viet Minh would be angry if we let Frenchmen (they thought all white men were French) stay in the village." He pointed out that his brother and his son-in-law were Viet Minh, "living in the forest." Then,

although he complained bitterly of a food shortage, he refused to accept any of our rice for fear of incurring Viet Minh displeasure. We were able to remain for a period in the next village, and it was apparent that the only outside organization with which these people had contact was the Viet Minh-Viet Cong.

The effect of this long-term contact was brought out even more strikingly in 1964 when one of the researchers of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and I were interviewing a Katu boy of about 16 years of age who had been wounded during a skirmish between Viet Cong and government troops. He was a "High Katu," a designation for those living at higher elevations in an area near the Laotian border even more remote than the area visited in 1957. The linguist had been conducting research on the Katu language with the aim of devising an alphabet, and the boy was the first High Katu she had been able to find. We were discussing some aspects of Katu kinship and agriculture when he surprised us by describing how they farm terraced paddy fields. This is a relatively sophisticated method of farming not found among the Katu located closer to the coastal plain where they have had long contact with the Vietnamese who employ terraces in their paddy farming. When we inquired whether

his people had always used this technique or someone had taught them, he just smiled and looked away.

Later in discussing the function of the men's house in his village, he astonished us by taking the pen and writing a sentence in Katu which read, "Where is my older brother and my older sister?" His handwriting was relatively clear, and he used the same diacritical marks as the Vietnamese to indicate vowel differences. He beamed and noted that I had written similar terms for "older brother" and "older sister" the day before. It turned out that he had a complete alphabet which the linguist felt was very well done. When we asked where he learned to write, he just smiled and looked away.

Clearly these innovations were introduced by Vietnamese, and the only Vietnamese who have been in the High Katu area for any length of time during the past 25 years were members of the Viet Minh and the Viet Cong.

At the other polar extreme are those areas where Viet Cong presence is fleeting and without any meaningful effect on the local society. Innumerable examples of this brief presence can be cited. In between these polar extremes, the Viet Cong presence varies considerably. There are, for example, some areas where the government, for all intents and

purposes, has control but where there are active Viet Cong cadres. Some urban areas would be the best examples of this.

Pacification must be geared to these variations in Viet Cong presence. To bring terraced paddy fields successfully to sudden-shifting agriculturists is no mean achievement, and devising an alphabet requires long and patient research. Both necessitate long and close contact with the society concerned, and such things indicate that the Viet Minh-Viet Cong imprint on the High Katu is something deep and lasting. This is also the case with the Cu Chi peasants. Replacing the Viet Cong presence by government presence goes far beyond "rooting out the infrastructure," for it involves basic changes in many aspects of these local societies, particularly the attitude-value system. This is an exceedingly difficult thing to do in less than 20 years, if indeed it can be done at all.

As one moves away from that polar extreme, the likelihood of replacing the Viet Cong presence increases. In the above-cited instance of Viet Cong cadres in urban areas, for example, the government police have been singularly successful at breaking terrorist rings in Saigon. In many villages, when effective security has been achieved the not-well-established Viet Cong presence has dissipated. Finally, at

the other extreme the government need only to keep armed Viet Cong bands out and establish government services designed to meet the people's needs in order to gain their support.

Moving on to the broader aim of establishing government control over the entire country, the matter of alternatives to either government or Viet Cong presence is raised, and here the status of the sociopolitical groups noted above and the possibility of accommodation to them become primary considerations.

An Giang province in the Mekong River delta is and has been without Viet Cong presence because it is an area with a particularly heavy concentration of Hoa Hao adherents. Ever since the Viet Minh captured and presumably assassinated Huynh Phu So, founder of the sect, the Hoa Hao have assumed a vigorous anti-Viet Minh-Viet Cong position. In 1966 the hierarchical factions in the sect drew together and made an accommodation with the government of Nguyen Cao Ky. What it was is not known, but ever since the Hoa Hao have supported the central government.

In parts of the Highlands a growing force against the Viet Cong at the village level has been the Highlander movement known as FULRO (acronym for Front Unifiée de Lutte



des Races Opprimées or "United Fighting Front for the Oppressed Races") which appeared after the first of two uprisings against the government in September 1964 (the second was in December 1965). The second uprising took place because of pent-up grievances on the part of the Highlanders. Beginning in 1956 the Viet Cong were active in parts of the highlands, first spreading antigovernment and pro-Viet Cong propaganda and organizing local cadre. The policies of the Diem regime were aimed at rapid assimilation of the Highlanders into Vietnamese culture through such things as suppression of the Highlander Law Courts established by the French, doing away with instruction in those Highlander languages which had alphabets, and changing all place names hitherto Highlander to Vietnamese. Bringing Vietnamese culture to the highlands also was one of several goals of the Land Development Center Project which involved settling Vietnamese (the planned total was 88,000 on 30,000 hectares, and by 1959 there were reported to be 38,000 on 13,000 hectares) on land without regard for Highlander land tenure claims. The Viet Cong played upon the consequent discontents of the Highlanders (Radio Hanoi aided with broadcasts beamed to the southern highlands in four languages weekly), and by 1960 Viet Cong influence among the Highlanders was gaining.

Among many who were not pro-Viet Cong, there was deepening antigovernment sentiment.

With the appearance of FULRO the situation began to change. FULRO adopted an anti-Viet Cong stand, and since 1964 its influence has spread through parts of Kontum, Pleiku, Phu Bon, Darlac, Quang Duc, Lam Dong, and Tuyen Duc provinces. In these areas the Viet Cong propaganda agents and guerillas functioning at the village level "like fish swimming in the water" have been replaced by FULRO. Viet Cong presence in these highland provinces is in the form of armed units, either hard core Viet Cong or North Vietnamese Army.

Following the 1964 revolt, the government began an accommodation to both the FULRO and non-FULRO leaders by organizing meetings at which they could openly express their needs and desires. Essentially they all agreed that they wanted the right to retain their cultural identity and have more participation in the political life of the nation through stronger representation in the central government and a greater voice in local administration. At these meetings they also expressed their desire for economic and social programs that would improve their living standards. They stated explicitly that they wanted titles to the lands

they traditionally occupied and farmed and restoration of the Highlander Law Courts. Eventually a core of the leaders consolidated all of these things into one document, a statut particulier or kind of bill of rights. As accommodation proceeded, the government restored the law courts, allotting funds for construction and furnishings, approved instruction of indigenous languages in the first years of primary schools, and established a Special Commission for Highland Affairs in Saigon with a Highlander as commissioner. On August 29, 1967, in a ceremony at Ban Me Thuot, Chief of State Thieu and Premier Ky signed a new land law paving the way for Highlander land titles. They also signed a version of the statut particulier, but it varies from that drawn up by the Highlanders, so it remains to be seen whether it will be acceptable to them.

As already indicated in both cases, the alternative to Viet Cong presence is not government but Hoa Hao and FULRO. The populations in the areas concerned do not rally to the government but to their own leaders, and through accommodation to these leaders the government gains their support. The question then arises whether the government can accommodate to other groups as well. With those that are sufficiently organized, it certainly is possible. The

Catholics and Buddhists have well-defined hierarchies and considerable following. While the Catholics have more unity than the Buddhists, both religious groups have articulate leaders who are prepared to make their desires known. The Revolutionary Dai Viets under Ha Thuc Ky are well organized and influential in central Vietnam, and the Tan Dai Viets have considerable following in the Saigon area. Unfortunately their leader, Dr. Nguyen Ton Hoan, remains out of Vietnam. The VNQDD has strong following in central Vietnam, but its organization suffers from internal splintering. The Cao Daists continue to be split into eight sects, and although each one has a well-structured organization and numerous adherents, it would be easier and probably more effective for the government to accommodate to the Cao Daists collectively.

The Chinese constitute an important segment of the urban population, and most are affiliated with associations, some of which are commercial and some ethnolinguistic such as Cantonese, Fukienese, or Hakka associations. Most, if not all, of these groups are united under the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the organization that dealt successfully with the Diem government in the 1957 crisis over citizenship. An incipient movement similar to FULRO exists among the

Cham of the southcentral coastal area, and among the predominately Muslim Cham in the vicinity of Chau Doc, there is a very well organized Muslim Association whose leader spent 12 years in Mecca. There also are reported to be several small but active movements among the Khmer population.

Although they were not mentioned previously, there are several other interest groups which appear to have gained recently in formal structure as well as in membership. The labor unions have long been organized, particularly in Saigon, but the wartime demand for labor and large-scale hiring by American firms have given them a considerable increase in membership. There also are indications that the unions have grown as a force in the urban areas. Another recent development is the emergence of the Vietnamese Federation of Tenant Farmers which, if it continues to grow, will become a very influential organization in the rural areas.

Only unofficial figures, some of which are considered conservative, are available on political party membership, religious affiliation or ethnic identity, but they do give some indication of the population segments either actually or potentially affected by the activities of these socio-political groups. Currently, total population of South Vietnam is estimated to be close to 17,000,000. At the time

of the 1966 Constitutional Assembly elections, there were estimated to be some 500,000 of the FNQDD and 200,000 of the Dai Viets, most of them members of the Revolutionary Dai Viets. Catholics keep relatively good records on membership, and they are reported to number 1,250,000. Less reliable are the figures of 1,500,000 for the Hoa Hao and 750,000 for the Cao Daists. The latter figure more than likely is too low, and some Cao Daist leaders claim a membership of at least 3,000,000 for all the sects. Unfortunately, any figures on Buddhist affiliation, even for these organizations already noted, are nonexistent. Very often it is reported that 80 percent of the Vietnamese population is Buddhist, but this clearly is too high if one considers active adherence. (The Cult of the Ancestors, which is not related to Buddhism but which can also be practiced by Buddhists, is the most predominant religious institution among the Vietnamese). My own estimate is that between 30 and 40 percent of the population would be active Buddhists.

There are estimated to be 1,000,000 Chinese, 500,000 Khmer, and 50,000 Cham. The Vietnamese government reports 642,855 Highlanders, but figures compiled in the highlands by me in collaboration with Summer Institute of Linguists researchers, some missionaries, and some local officials

total close to 1,000,000 Highlanders. Excluding the Buddhists and taking the lower figures for the Cao Daists and the Highlanders, the total for all of these groups is 5,892,855, which is approximately one-third of the 17,000,000 total population. But if the higher figures for the Cao Daists and Highlanders are used, and the Buddhists are reckoned at approximately 35 percent or around 5,000,000, then the total for the groups jumps to 13,500,000 or close to 80 percent of the total population.

In accommodating to these other sociopolitical groups, the government would do well to encourage those already well organized to consolidate their leadership, increase the effectiveness of their communication and internal structure, and continue recruitment. Groups less developed should be encouraged to build themselves into viable movements which can assume a meaningful role both locally and nationally. Accommodation to these sociopolitical groups will mean giving them more prerogatives over territories and populations where they are in definite predominance. This has been the case with the Hoa Hao, and it is happening to some degree with the Highlander leaders. In working out similar arrangements with the other sociopolitical groups, the government stands to gain considerably in increased support among rural

and urban populations and extend its influence over larger territory.

An essential part of this process of accommodation is to give the various groups strong representation and voice in the central government. The more participant their leaders become in the affairs of the nation, the more committed they will be to its well-being. The best way to achieve this is an amalgamation of elected representatives of these groups into a body such as a national assembly. A model for this type of amalgamation existed in the Constitutional Assembly which resulted from the elections of September 11, 1966. Practically all of the groups noted above were represented in the Constitutional Assembly. Of the 117 seats, 104 were ethnic Vietnamese while 6 were southern Highlanders, 2 of them members of the FULRO movement. There were 2 northern Highlanders, both from Thai-speaking groups that had come south as refugees in 1954, 4 Khmer, and 1 Cham. Unofficially there were estimated to have been 34 Buddhists, 35 Catholics, 5 Cao Daists, and 10 Hoa Hao. The remainder either had no religious affiliation or it was unknown. Although figures for representatives of political parties are not available, there were Tan Dai Viets, Revolutionary Dai Viets, and VNQDD affiliates.



The Constitutional Assembly functioned as the first real open forum for political, religious, and ethnic representatives in South Vietnam. It was the first opportunity many, if not most, of them had to make contact with one another, and they formed interesting blocs. The Democratic alliance bloc included 50 delegates, among them a number of Hoa Hao, Cao Daists, VNQDD, and some Catholics. The Greater People's Bloc with 20 members was led by Dai Viets, and the Southern Renaissance Bloc was comprised of 12 young southerners, most of them supporters of Tran Van Huong, a southern nationalist who had served briefly as Premier under Chief of State Phan Khac Suu in late 1964. The remaining delegates were considered independents.

Due to the electoral mechanism based on national slates rather than regional ones -- provinces in the case of the 1966 election -- the Senate elected in the September 3, 1967 election is less representative of the sociopolitical groups. Of the 60 seats, 29 were won by Catholics, 12 by Buddhists, 2 by Hoa Hao, and 3 by Cao Daists. One declared himself to be an Animist, and the remainder did not indicate any religious affiliation. Only the Revolutionary Dai Viets got candidates elected, winning 10 seats. Of the ethnic minority candidates only 1 southern Highlander and 1 northern High-

lander were elected. Finally, it also resulted in an imbalance in regional representation with 20 northerners, 21 southerners, and 15 from central Vietnam elected. Since the electoral process of the forthcoming election to choose members of the Lower House will be similar to that of the 1966 election, this new body holds the promise of being more representative.

This aspect of the accommodation must be achieved through honest elections, and the elected assembly must then be given a real freedom to perform its functions free of pressures from without in much the same way that the U.S. Congress and British Parliament do. Such meaningful representation in the central government will do much to bridge the gap between the city and country -- a gap that has been a source of difficulty in establishing government presence or influence in the countryside. (It should be pointed out that many of the representatives and leaders of many of the sociopolitical groups are rural people.)

In coming together into an assembly, the diverse groups may well realize the need to cooperate and work together as they did realizing the goal of the Constitutional Assembly in writing a constitution suited for Vietnam. Out of this could arise a solidarity long lacking in Vietnamese society.

At this point it is important to consider the future role of the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. It appears more and more certain that the Vietnam war will end through negotiations, and it also seems certain that the Viet Cong will participate as one of the negotiating parties. It is inevitable that the question of a coalition government will be broached, and here the concept of accommodation will become important. All too often when the word coalition is mentioned it evokes the image of two monolithic blocks -- the government and the Viet Cong -- struggling for predominance. The Communist takeover in post-World War II Czechoslovakia and the turbulent coalition in Laos are cited as examples of the dire consequences of such arrangements. Neither of these situations is analogous with Vietnam. In Vietnam it would not be a matter of turning over ministries to the Viet Cong but rather of accommodating to the Viet Cong as it did to the other sociopolitical groups. This, of course, is based on the premise that the process of accommodation will continue so that it can be extended to the Viet Cong.

In this setting the Viet Cong must be seen as another dimension in the complicated sociopolitical pattern. It goes without saying that the North Vietnamese Army units must

leave South Vietnam, and as a political party the Viet Cong must divest itself of its military capability (as the Cao Daists were disarmed following their defeat by the Diem forces in 1955). Accommodation may involve such things as allowing the Viet Cong political organization to remain in areas such as Cu Chi and the Katu country where they have had control for many years. In some of these areas the Viet Cong have demonstrated admirable efficiency in coping with administrative and economic problems. The innovations among the Katu are an outstanding example of this.

As with the other groups, the Viet Cong would participate in free elections in order to send their representatives in a national assembly. With their core of obviously dedicated leaders, the Viet Cong undoubtedly will be a strong element in the assembly (just as the Catholics with their discipline have emerged as the strongest group in the newly elected Senate). This does not mean, however, that they inevitably will dominate. Their real strength is in those areas they have dominated since the Viet Minh days (some of these were noted earlier). The heavy voting in 1966 (4,274,872) and 1967 (4,735,404) in the face of Viet Cong opposition to the elections is a strong indicator of non-Viet Cong strength. The potential number of people who might be rallied by the

other sociopolitical groups also was reflected in the figures noted previously. It will be in the interest of all the other groups that the Viet Cong do not assume a predominant place, and as solidarity is generated through accommodation, their means of preventing any Viet Cong takeover are improved constantly. As with the Constitutional Assembly, there more than likely will be blocs (no sooner was the Senate election made final when Tran Van Don's Nong Cong Binh or Farmer, Worker, Soldier's Movement began to gain following), and it will be through such blocs that the balance of power will be maintained.

It also cannot be assumed that the Viet Cong, once they are in the government, will always act in concert -- not all of them are Communists. Then too, few of the rank and file are Viet Cong for ideological reasons. As the other groups gain a greater role in the political life of Vietnam, they offer alternatives to those in the Viet Cong who seek expression of their needs and desires (this certainly has been the case with the FULRO). Finally, for all of the groups there is the common reward of working toward the goal they all seek -- the opportunity to build the Vietnamese nation in a peaceful setting.